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AN ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY OF THE DISPOSAL OF FEDERAL RECORDS, 1950-1985

James Gregory Bradsher

From 1950 to 1985 the federal government experienced much success in disposing of records with insufficient retention values. During those thirty-five years some 140 million cubic feet of records were created, and some 120 million cubic feet of records were destroyed. By way of comparison, between 1789 and 1950 the federal government created less than 30 million cubic feet of records and destroyed less than 10 million cubic feet of records. To a large extent the success the federal government has experienced in efficiently and effectively destroying temporary records, particularly during the past four decades, is the result of the records disposition activities of the National Archives. While these activities prior to 1950 are generally well known and appreciated, those since 1950 are not. What follows is a discussion of those efforts during the past thirty-five years and a brief discussion of what the future holds in store for the National Archives and the federal government.¹

The National Archives began 1950 with a new name, the National Archives and Records Service (NARS), reflecting its dual responsibilities for federal archives and records.² In both areas NARS faced many challenges, but probably none was more important than identifying permanent records for retention and temporary records for disposal. This records disposition task in 1950 was indeed a challenge, as half of the 20 million cubic feet of records was

unscheduled.³ Addressing this challenge, NARS in 1951 informed the federal agencies that by 30 June 1954 they would have to develop schedules identifying all of their records and proposing dispositions for each series of records. NARS, upon receiving the schedules, would appraise each series.⁴ Those appraised as temporary, with the approval of Congress, would be authorized for disposal.⁵ To assist agencies in developing their schedules and improving their records disposition programs, NARS began providing records disposition training courses and publications.⁶ NARS also helped the agencies by producing General Records Schedules, which provided approved dispositions for routine administrative records common to most agencies.⁷

By 1955, as a result of NARS and agencies efforts, upwards of ninety-five percent of all federal records were covered by a schedule.⁹ Consequently, 17.7 million cubic feet of records were destroyed between July 1949 and July 1956. During that same period, however, the federal government created three million cubic feet of records more than it destroyed, leaving a total accumulation of 23.3 million cubic feet of records, or twice as many records than existed in 1941.

Despite the large volume of records being destroyed and the success in getting records scheduled, Archivist of the United States (1948-1965) Wayne C. Grover, in 1954, wrote "the simple fact is that with all our efforts we still have not solved the problem."¹⁰ Grover's assessment was accurate, and the records disposition problem worsened during the late 1950s for a variety of reasons. The first, over which NARS had little control, was ever increasing annual volume of records created by the federal agencies. Between July 1949 and July 1958 approximately 27.5 million cubic feet of records were created, an amount nearly equalling the amount between 1789 and 1949.¹¹

Federal agencies, in attempting to schedule their growing volume of records expeditiously and often not fully evaluating the value of each series,

recommended that twenty-five percent of their records be retained indefinitely. ¹² This in itself was not a major problem as NARS appraised each series on the schedules. Those it did not believe warranted indefinite or permanent retention were recommended for disposal. Unfortunately, NARS lacked sufficient resources to appraise adequately all the series recommended for indefinite retention, and agencies, often disagreeing with the NARS recommendations, took no actions to reschedule their records for disposal. Thus, millions of cubic feet of records remained unscheduled, even though they were identified on schedules. Because of insufficient NARS resources and the agencies believing they had scheduled most of their series of records--even though they were technically unscheduled--the number of series appraised by NARS during the late 1950s declined significantly. Between July 1952 and July 1956, NARS appraised an average 6,000 series annually. This figure dropped to less than 2,000 between July 1957 and July 1960. ¹³

Another problem was actually a mixed blessing. Agencies were allowed to retire their unscheduled records, including those recommended for indefinite retention, to the Federal Records Centers (FRCs). The FRCs, authorized by the Federal Records Act of 1950 and operated by NARS, provided agencies with low-cost storage for their records until such time as the records were transferred to the National Archives or were destroyed. In 1949, the first Hoover Commission recommended that such centers store at least twenty percent of all federal records. That goal was reached so quickly that, in 1955, when the FRCs contained forty percent of all federal records, the second Hoover Commission recommended that the goal be raised to fifty percent. ¹⁴ By allowing agencies to retire their unscheduled records to the FRCs, the federal government saved millions of dollars in storage costs, and NARS obtained physical custody of many valuable records, thereby minimizing the danger of their accidental destruction. Additionally, many of these records, Grover

maintained, were too current to be appraised adequately. This reason was actually a rationalization, as it is generally better to appraise records as early in their life cycle as possible. ¹⁵ In any event, without sufficient resources to appraise the millions of cubic feet of unscheduled records retired to the FRCs, NARS was content to gain physical custody of them until such time as it did have the resources. ¹⁶

The priority NARS gave to records disposition during the late 1950s was another factor limiting the destruction of records. When a Records Management Division was created within NARS in December 1949, records disposition was given high priority, and the division devoted considerable resources to providing training on the subject for thousands of federal employees. But, by the mid 1950s, NARS had turned its attention increasingly to other aspects of records management.

This change in priorities was the result of two factors. First was the belief that most records were covered by schedules, and second was President Dwight D. Eisenhower's August 1955 order to the General Services Administration (GSA) to give more attention to paperwork management. This order resulted from a recommendation made by the second Hoover Commission that agencies do the same. Responsibility for advising agencies on their paperwork management activities fell on the Records Management Division, which became the Office of Records Management in November 1956. ¹⁷ Thus, with more attention given to such activities as mail, directives, forms, and correspondence management, less attention was given to records disposition.

By the end of the decade, NARS was devoting less than three percent of its training resources to records disposition. ¹⁸ It did, however, produce some very useful publications, such as "Applying Records Schedules" and "The Appraisal of Modern Public Records," for the agencies and its own personnel to use. ¹⁹

On 30 June 1959, NARS estimated that only 1.7 of

the federal government's 24 million cubic feet of records were still unscheduled. ²⁰ But, by simply allowing agencies to identify over twenty-five percent of their records for indefinite retention and NARS not having the resources to appraise those records fully, some six million cubic feet of records were technically unscheduled as the decade ended. This situation, along with the ever growing volume of records being created, resulted in more records being created than destroyed. Between 1950 and 1958, the federal government created 27.5 million cubic feet and destroyed 23.9 million cubic feet of records. ²¹

In 1960 the General Accounting Office (GAO), because of its concern with the accumulation of records, reviewed the state of records disposition in the federal government. Its report, issued in 1961, called for better disposition practices, especially a more selective retention policy, that is, agencies should stop insisting that twenty-five percent of their records should be retained indefinitely. ²² NARS agreed and responded to the report by taking several actions.

In January 1962, NARS created an Office of Records Appraisal and charged it with reducing the volume of records that had been identified for indefinite retention. This office, headed by Theodore Schellenberg, author of the classic Modern Archives (1956), immediately began assisting agencies to develop records retention plans which identified records of enduring value in functional terms. After he retired in December 1963, the unit was abolished, and its functions were divided between the Offices of Federal Records Centers and the National Archives. ²³

By June 1964, sixty-nine agencies and their subdivisions had prepared retention plans, covering some three million cubic feet of records. Reviewing these plans, NARS found that about two percent of the records covered by them would be retained permanently. ²⁴ Although this percentage was a lot more realistic than that of the previous decade, the retention plans suffered from problems of frequently

being vague and difficult to implement. By the end of the decade, NARS and the agencies had given up on the retention plans as a mechanism to reduce the volume of records identified for permanent retention.

Congress and the president were also concerned about the government's records disposition efforts. During the mid 1960s, a House of Representatives subcommittee held hearings to study what they termed the "Federal Paperwork Jungle." Although the subcommittee was pleased with NARS's efforts and the fact that agencies were able to reduce the average life of a temporary record series from thirteen to nine years between 1955 and 1966 and were retiring substantial quantities of records to the FRCs, the subcommittee found problems still existed. Specifically, too many records were being designated for permanent retention and too many temporary records were being maintained beyond their scheduled disposal date. The solution to these problems, the subcommittee reported, was to give greater attention to identifying records for disposal and destroying them when scheduled. ²⁵

In January 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson imposed a limited moratorium on the purchase of new filing cabinets, believing this would encourage agencies to retire records to the FRCs and destroy eligible records. As a result, agencies purchased sixty-eight percent fewer filing cabinets in 1965 than in 1964. In September 1966, the president addressed a memorandum to all federal agencies urging the disposal of eligible records, retirement of records unneeded for current business, and the reduction of filing equipment. ²⁶

Agencies responded to the requests made of them by Congress and the president, particularly in retiring records to the FRCs. Between 1960 and 1973 the holdings of the FRCs grew from 5 to 11.5 million cubic feet of records. Much of this growth was the result of agencies simply dumping their unscheduled records into the FRCs. This was especially true for the Washington National Records Center in Suitland, Maryland, which opened in 1967 with a capacity for

over 3.5 million cubic feet of records.

Although the federal government saved millions of dollars in storage costs, use of the FRCs had the negative effect of agencies giving less attention to scheduling their records for disposition. It is not surprising that of the thirty-three agencies NARS inspected between 1965 and 1970 only three were found to have good records disposition programs.²⁷ Unfortunately, NARS did not have the resources to help agencies. During the mid 1960s, NARS had only fifteen archivists assigned to appraisal duties, and in April 1968, as a result of budget restrictions and vacancies, the NARS appraisal staff consisted of ten archivists.²⁸

The unscheduled records problem and the continued growth of records, some 28.7 million cubic feet having accumulated by 1973, prompted the GAO to evaluate the government's records disposition program that year. Its report criticized the lack of records disposal efforts and the NARS policy of allowing agencies to retire their unscheduled records to the FRCs.²⁹ NARS responded to the report by prohibiting, with some exceptions, agencies from retiring these records to the FRCs and by creating a Records Disposition Division within its Office of Federal Records Centers, which would concentrate on reducing the volume of the government's unscheduled records.³⁰

These actions had a dramatic impact on federal records disposition activities. Agencies began developing schedules. This resulted in a significant increase in the number of series submitted to NARS for appraisal. During the period July 1972 to October 1977, agencies submitted an average nine thousand series annually, or twice as many as they had during the 1950s.³¹ This increase, it should be noted, was also the result of agencies submitting newly created series for appraisal as well as requesting the change of disposition for already scheduled series.

With the increased attention given to the growing paper mountain, well over 25 million cubic feet of

records were destroyed during the 1970s. The General Records Schedules produced by NARS proved very beneficial to agencies and covered the disposition of over thirty percent of all federal records by the end of the decade. Use of these schedules was made mandatory by Congress in 1978 for all post-1921 records to which they applied.³² Another NARS activity helping agencies was its inspections of their records disposition programs. These inspections, begun in 1963, provided an excellent mechanism for determining how well agencies were destroying their temporary records and for offering suggestions for program improvements. But, because of limited resources, NARS was able to hold five or six inspections a year during the late 1960s and only two or three annually a decade later.³³

Despite NARS and agencies' efforts to reduce the volume of records accumulating during the 1970s, well over 34 million cubic feet existed as the decade ended. Two major reasons why disposals did not keep up with the amount created were the lack of resources to appraise the unscheduled records in the FRCs and many records, otherwise eligible for destruction, were not destroyed because of court orders, litigation, or potential litigation. Although after 1973 agencies were prevented from routinely dumping their unscheduled records into the FRCs, these centers in September 1979 held 3.9 million cubic feet of unscheduled records.³⁴

At the same time the FRCs held over 500,000 cubic feet of records that could not be destroyed because of legal and administrative restraints, over half of them involving the IBM antitrust lawsuit. Three years later, despite the resolution of the IBM case, there were still over 430,000 cubic feet of records in the FRCs that could not be destroyed because of litigation involving Agent Orange, asbestos, and nuclear testing. Another 27,000 cubic feet of Office of Personnel Management personnel security investigation records in 1982 were being delayed from destruction because of congressional interest in them.³⁵

Perhaps the most extensive and far-reaching freeze came from a court order halting the destruction of all Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) records. In January 1980, Judge Harold H. Greene of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia ordered the FBI to halt the destruction of their records until NARS reappraised them. This NARS did in 1981. But as of this writing, the court order remains in effect while the judge reviews the 1,400-page NARS appraisal report.³⁶

At the end of the 1970s the federal paper mountain continued to grow. But it was but a mole hill compared to the electronic mountain range that developed during the decade. In 1970 the federal government's reels of computer tape contained about seven percent of all of the government's information. By the end of the decade, upwards of two-thirds of federal information was contained on reels of computer tape.³⁷ To address the disposition of computer-generated records NARS, late in the 1960s, created a Data Archives Staff unit and made it responsible for machine-readable records and archives. Within a few years this unit produced a General Records Schedule covering computer-generated records, and in 1974, it became a full-fledged division. By 1980 it had a staff of fifteen professionals.³⁸

The growing amount of information and records being created and accumulated during the latter part of the 1970s caused great concern to those who realized that if the government did not effectively manage its records, the information contained in them would be harder to find and use. Congress responded to this concern by adopting numerous pieces of legislation beginning with the establishment of the Paperwork Reduction Commission in 1975 and culminating with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980, all of which were aimed at the more effective management of the creation, use, maintenance, and disposition of records and information.³⁹

In 1980, to ascertain how well NARS and the

agencies were responding to the congressional initiatives, the GAO undertook an audit of the government's records management efforts. Its report, entitled "Federal Records Management: A History of Neglect," was issued in February 1981. This title, in view of the efforts made by the agencies and NARS, is not only incorrect but unfair. Nevertheless, the GAO was correct in pointing out that federal records disposition programs had some shortcomings.⁴⁰ But the findings of the GAO were nothing that NARS did not know already. Its agency inspections between 1975 and 1980 found that only one-third of the agencies inspected had good records disposition programs.⁴¹

Even before the issuance of the GAO report NARS increased its disposition efforts, especially getting unscheduled records appraised. Agencies, beginning in 1979, were frequently encouraged by NARS to identify their unscheduled series and to submit them for appraisal. Many agencies responded to the encouragement, primarily in order to have those records eligible to be retired to a FRC. Between October 1977 and October 1982, agencies submitted nearly 70,000 series for appraisal. Until early 1981 NARS made significant progress in appraising those series, as well as the backlog that remained from the 45,000 series which had been submitted between July 1972 and October 1977.⁴²

But, in the spring of 1981, the progress began to slow as NARS assigned seventeen archivists to appraise the FBI records. This number of appraisers was normally what NARS assigned to handle all federal records. As a result of this unique utilization of resources NARS had a backlog of 15,511 series to appraise on 30 September 1981. The number climbed to 21,042 by July 1982, but with the return of the FBI appraisers to regular duties, the backlog declined to 16,138 series by the end of 1982.⁴³

Late in 1979, a major effort was begun to appraise and schedule the unscheduled records in the FRCs, which at the time contained 3.9 million cubic feet of such records.⁴⁴ By October 1984, only

658,768 cubic feet of the FRCs' 14.3 million cubic feet of records were still unscheduled. ⁴⁵ The appraising of over three million cubic feet of records in six years was a significant accomplishment. However, it should be noted that a sizable portion of the volume consisted of a few enormous series, and in several instances, the appraisal simply called for the selection of certain files for permanent retention and the destruction of the remainder. ⁴⁶ Another sizable volume of unscheduled records, because of the manner in which the records were arranged, were scheduled to be transferred to the National Archives, where the actual appraisal would take place during archival processing.

Although NARS expended considerable resources to appraise the unscheduled records in the FRCs, it did not neglect its other records disposition responsibilities. During the 1979-1985 period, NARS continued to evaluate agency programs, issue handbooks and regulations, hold workshops and seminars, and appraise records. ⁴⁷ To facilitate the disposal of records, in 1983 NARS published a major update of the General Records Schedules, which included disposition standards for new series of temporary records and additional schedules. ⁴⁸ The following year it authorized agencies to destroy records lacking archival value that had been microfilmed and to apply the disposition approved for the hardcopy to the microfilm without the specific, prior approval of NARS. Hitherto agencies were required to obtain NARS approval before disposing of the hardcopy. ⁴⁹ NARS also expended considerable energy appraising the series agencies submitted for appraisal. Despite losing many experienced appraisers during 1983 and 1984, NARS was able to reduce the backlog of series to appraise from almost 17,600 on 1 October 1982 to 8,200 series on 1 October 1984, and eventually to 6,000 series by 1 April 1985. ⁵⁰

The efforts by the agencies and NARS to appraise and schedule records, to reduce excessive retention

periods, to narrow the scope of freezes on records destruction, and to destroy records at their scheduled disposal date resulted in the federal government's being able to slow the growth of records during the 1979-1984 period. Nevertheless, the accumulation of records increased from 36.8 to over 40 million cubic feet during the period. ⁵¹ This latter figure represented a doubling of the volume since 1950, despite the federal government's destroying well over 120 million cubic feet from 1950 to 1985.

Although the federal government made considerable progress in arresting the accumulation of federal records, it was not equally successful in addressing the disposition of machine-readable records, which by 1985 contained upwards of eighty percent of the government's information. ⁵² Well over one-third of the government's 15 million reels of computer tape had not been appraised, and more than twenty major agencies had not scheduled any of their machine-readable records. ⁵³ That more progress was not made was the result of several factors.

Many agencies, often not realizing that those records needed to be scheduled like any other media, did not identify their machine-readable records on schedules. Additionally, NARS did not have sufficient resources to assist agencies address their machine-readable records. From a staff of fifteen professionals in 1980, NARS's Machine-Readable Archives Division was reduced, after budget cuts and a hiring freeze, in status to a branch and to a staff of seven professionals in 1982. ⁵⁴ Although NARS, working with the GSA during 1984 and 1985, attempted to make agencies more aware of their responsibilities with respect to their electronic records, much work remains to be done before the federal government matches the success it has had in addressing the effective and efficient disposition of paper records. ⁵⁵

The flurry of records disposition activities during the 1979-1984 period led to the destruction of some 30 million cubic feet of records. Historians

and others became concerned that NARS was more interested in destroying rather than preserving records.⁵⁶ In 1979, some forty journalists, political activists, historians, and organizations filed suit in a U.S. district court to halt the destruction of the FBI's records. They believed that NARS had not done a thorough job in originally appraising that agency's records.⁵⁷ During 1980 and 1981, historians, court officials, and others complained that a disposition schedule approved in 1980 would allow the destruction of many valuable district court case files.⁵⁸

NARS responded to the concerns and complaints by increasing its efforts to explain how the disposition process worked, by seeking the advice of those doing the complaining, and by assuring the historical community that in appraising records NARS continually sought to preserve all records of enduring value.⁵⁹ It also developed a new disposition schedule for the U.S. district court case files and, because of a court order, reappraised the records of the FBI. Seventeen archivists, including the author, were assigned the task.⁶⁰

From the beginning of his tenure as Archivist of the United States (1980-1985), Robert M. Warner urged that his agency improve its disposition policies, procedures, and practices.⁶¹ One major change in the way NARS approached its appraisals during the 1980s was utilizing the team approach, primarily in addressing voluminous series of records. These were generally case files of mixed research potential. In such appraisal NARS developed specific criteria for identifying valuable case files for permanent retention.⁶² NARS also consulted historians and other researchers for an additional perspective on the value of certain records.⁶³

To improve the disposition process further, Warner appointed a task force to study the NARS appraisal and disposition program during the fall of 1982. This task force, on which the author served as a consultant, issued its report in November 1983. The following October, Warner approved most of its

recommendations and assigned specific offices to implement them.⁶⁴ To improve the effectiveness of the NARS's services to the agencies, he created an Office of Records Administration in December 1984. The Records Disposition Division, which had been part of the Office of Federal Records Centers, was placed in the new office, where it was renamed the Records Appraisal and Disposition Division.⁶⁵

On 1 April 1985, NARS became an independent agency, the National Archives and Records Administration. During NARS's existence the federal government made significant progress towards the goals of scheduling all federal records and destroying temporary ones in an effective and timely manner. On 1 April 1985, ninety-five percent of the FRC holdings were scheduled, and it is estimated that eighty percent of the volume of federal records were scheduled. NARS's scheduling efforts resulted in the federal government's being able to destroy some 120 million cubic feet of records between 1950 and 1985.

Despite the successes that had been experienced during the previous thirty-five years, the records disposition challenge still remained formidable on 1 April 1985.⁶⁶ Over six million cubic feet of records still were unscheduled, including at least five million reels of computer tape and some 600,000 cubic feet of records in the FRCs. Many of the latter records, because of their older age and the manner in which they were arranged and retired, will be difficult to appraise.

To appraise those records, as well as new series and revisions to existing ones, the National Archives on 1 April 1985 had less than thirty staff members, many of whom had other duties in addition to appraisal work. Agencies, who have the responsibility for identifying and scheduling their records frequently do not have the resources and expertise to do an adequate job. Many agencies are still not properly scheduling their nontextual records (that is, machine-readable, audiovisual, and cartographic), or if they do, not complying with the schedules.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, the National Archives

does not have the resources to monitor agency practices nor to train agency personnel fully in proper disposition practices.

The future of federal records disposition presents perhaps a greater challenge today than it did in 1950. This is not only because three times more records are being created annually than thirty-five years ago, but because information is being recorded, stored, and accessed on a growing variety of media. This latter factor raises many questions about what is a record and whether or not the series concept is still valid.

Fortunately, both the National Archives and the federal agencies realize that questions like those need answers, and both are committed to finding them. Fortunately also, both are committed to ensuring that records of enduring value are identified and preserved, and those that do not warrant continued retention are destroyed in an effective and timely manner. Just how successful they will be can be easily judged by how effective the federal government is in finding and using the information it needs and what records are available for researchers. If the past is indeed prologue, the federal government, with the help of the National Archives, should be very successful.

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NOTES

1 For background on federal records disposition activities prior to 1950, the growth, and volumes of federal records, see the author's articles, "An Administrative History of the Disposal of Federal Records, 1789-1949," Provenance 3,2 (Fall 1985): 1-21; "When One Percent Means a Lot: The Percentage of Permanent Records in the National Archives," Organization of American Historians Newsletter 13, 2 (May 1985): 20-21; and "A Brief History of the Growth of Federal Government Records, Archives, and Information, 1789-1985," Government Publications Review 13 (1986): 491-505.

2 For background on the creation of NARS, see the author's "The National Archives: Serving Government, the Public, and Scholarship, 1950-1965," in Guardian of Heritage: Essays on the History of the National Archives, ed., Timothy Walch (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1985), 51-52.

3 General Services Administration, Annual Report of the Administrator of General Services for the Year Ending June 30, 1950 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951), 55-56 (hereafter cited as GSA, Annual Reports, with the fiscal year given).

4 Ibid., FY 52, 59; Robert H. Bahmer, "The National Archives After 20 Years," The American Archivist (hereafter cited as AA) 18, 3 (July 1955): 202.

5 In 1970, Congress stopped the requirement that disposal lists and schedules had to be sent to them for approval, except in those instances where the records covered by the lists and schedules may be of

interest to it.

6 GSA, Annual Reports, FY 52, 61-63; FY 53, 4-7; FY 54, 3-7.

7 Ibid., FY 53, 3; Isadore Perlman, "General Schedules and Federal Records," AA 15, 1 (January 1952): 27-38.

8 GSA, Annual Reports, FY 54, 6; H.G. Jones, The Records of a Nation: Their Management, Preservation, and Use (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 86.

9 GSA, Annual Reports, FY 56, 5.

10 Wayne C. Grover, "The National Archives at Age 20," AA 17, 2 (April 1954): 100.

11 GSA, Annual Reports, FY 54, 6; FY 56, 56; FY 58, 11.

12 Ibid., FY 54, 7; Bahmer, "The National Archives," 202; J.J. Hammitt, "Government Archives and Records Management," AA 28, 2 (April 1965): 219.

13 GSA, Annual Reports, FY 52, 72; FY 53, 12; FY 54, 13; FY 55, 9; FY 56, 10; FY 57, 11; FY 59, 29; FY 60, 15-16.

14 Donald R. McCoy, The National Archives: America's Ministry of Documents, 1934-1968 (Chapel

Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 275-277; Robert W. Krauskopf, "The Hoover Commissions and Federal Recordkeeping," AA 21, 4 (October 1958): 392; Everett O. Alldredge, "Records Centers--A Historical Footnote," Records Management Journal (hereafter cited as RMJ) 10, 1 (Spring 1972): 2-5.

15 Phillip C. Brooks, "The Selection of Records for Preservation," AA 3, 4 (October 1940): 226; T.R. Schellenber, Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 108-10.

16 Over 90,000 cubic feet of the records transferred to the FRCs between 1950 and 1954 were accessioned records of questionable value. Bahmer, "The National Archives After 20 Years," 200.

17 McCoy, The National Archives, 274-76; Krauskopf, "The Hoover Commissions," 390-95; GSA, Annual Reports, FY 59, 24.

18 Ibid., FY 60, 10.

19 Ibid., FY 57, 11; FY 59, 24. "The Appraisal of Modern Public Records" (National Archives Bulletin No. 8, 1956) was authored by T.R. Schellenberg.

20 Sixty-six percent of the records were scheduled for disposal, and twenty-seven percent were scheduled for permanent retention. GSA, Annual Reports, FY 59, 25.

21 Ibid., FY 58, 11.

22 U.S. General Accounting Office, "Review of Certain Records Management Activities: National Archives and Records Service, General Service Administration, December c 1961," (Washington, D.C.: U.S. General Accounting Office, October 1962), 1-16. The Second Hoover Commission also believed the twenty-five percent figure was too high. GSA, Annual Reports, FY 55, 5.

23 Martin I. Elzy, "Scholarship Versus Economy: Records Appraisal at the National Archives," Prologue: The Journal of the National Archives (hereafter cited as Prologue) 6, 3 (Fall 1974): 187. For an interesting account of Schellenberg's assignment to head the appraisal unit, see McCoy, The National Archives, 322-25.

24 GSA, Annual Reports, FY 62, 55; FY 63, 54; FY 64, 54-55.

25 U.S. Congress, The Federal Paperwork Jungle: A Report on the Paperwork Requirements Placed upon Business, Industry, and the Public by the Federal Departments and Agencies. Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, House of Representatives, 89th Congress, 1st Session. Report No. 52 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 51-52, 106; U.S. Congress, How to Cut Paperwork. Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, House of Representatives, 89th Congress, 2d Session. Report No. 2197 (Washington D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 1966), 2, 15-17, 30, 44.

26 Ibid., 17, 69-70.

27 U.S. General Accounting Office, "Federal Records Management: A History of Neglect," (Washington, D.C.: U.S.G.A.O., 24 February 1981), 9.

28 Jones, Records of a Nation, 86.

29 U.S. General Accounting Office, "Ways to Improve Records Management Practices in the Federal Government," (Washington, D.C.: U.S.G.A.O., 13 August 1973), passim.

30 Elzy, "Scholarship Versus Economy," 187; National Archives and Records Service, "Fiscal Year 1977 Report ot Congress on the Records Disposition Activities of the Federal Government," (February 1978), 6 (hereafter cited as NARS, "'year' Report on Records Disposition"). Until early 1985 audiovisual, cartographic, and machine-readable records were appraised by the National Archives custodial units having responsibility for those records.

31 NARS, "1977 Report on Records Disposition," Tab B; NARS, "1978 Report on Records Disposition," Tab B.

32 Ibid., 3.

33 U.S. General Accounting Office, "Federal Records Management: A History of Neglect," 8-10.

34 NARS, "1978 Report on Records Disposition," 3; NARS, "1979 Report on Records Disposition," 3, 10, Tab I.

35 Ibid., 10, Tab J; NARS, "1982 Report on

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appraised 49,400 series. NARS, "1982 Report on Records Disposition," Tab A.

43 Appraisal backlog figures from Office of Federal Records Centers Program Review, 1 February 1983.

44 NARS, "1979 Report on Records Disposition," Tab C.

45 NARS, "1984 Report on Records Disposition," 10.

46 Ibid., 10; NARS, "1983 Report on Records Disposition," 3, 13; NARS, "1982 Report on Records Disposition," 3, Tab E.

47 Ibid., 9; NARS, "1983 Report on Records Disposition," 15-17; NARS, "1984 Report on Federal Records Disposition," 11-12.

48 NARS, "1983 Report on Records Disposition," 5. In 1982 it was estimated that the General Records Schedules were applicable to thirty percent of all federal records. NARS, "1982 Report on Records Disposition," 3.

49 NARS, "1984 Report on Records Disposition," 13.

50 It should be noted that a provision in the National Archives and Records Administration Act of 1984 (Public Law 98-497) requires that the public be given an opportunity to comment on proposed disposal decisions by publishing notice about them in the Federal Register. Because of a desire to save on

printing costs NARS attempted to appraise as many series as possible before 1 April 1985 when the publishing requirement began.

51 During the same period the FRC holdings increased from 13.6 to 14.3 million cubic feet of records.

52 Committee on the Records of Government, Report, 89.

53 Ibid., 89; NARS, "1984 Report on Records Disposition," 4.

54 Ibid., 4-5; Committee on the Records of Government, Report, 89.

55 Ibid., 24-29, 85-90; NARS, "1984 Report on Records Disposition," 12; Trudy Huskamp Peterson, "Archival Principles and Records of the New Technology," AA 47, 4 (Fall 1984): 383-93.

56 Anna Kasten Nelson, "Challenge of Documenting the Federal Government in the Latter 20th Century," Prologue 14, 2 (Summer 1982): 89-92; [James] Greg[ory] Bradsher, "Archivists, Historians, and Records Disposition," The Federalist: Newsletter of the Society for History in the Federal Government 2, 2 (Spring 1981): 5-6, 8.

57 John Anthony Scott, "The FBI Files: A Challenge for Historians," American Historical Association Newsletter 18, 3 (March 1980): 1-2; Ann Mari Buitrago and Leon Andrew Immerman, Are You Now or Have You Ever Been in the FBI Files: How to

Secure and Interpret Your FBI Files (New York: Grover Press, Inc. , 1981), 35-40.

58 NARS, "1982 Report on Records Disposition," 7; Robert M. Warner, "The National Archives: A Memoir, 1980-1985," in Guardian of Heritage, 85.

59 Bradsher, "Archivists, Historians, and Records Disposition," 5-6, 8; idem, "When One Percent Means a Lot," 20-21; idem, "Army Historians and Army Records," The Army Historian 8 (Summer 1985): 6-7.

60 NARS, "1982 Report on Records Disposition," 7; NARS, "1984 Report on Records Disposition," 3; Warner, "The National Archives," 84-85; NARS, "Appraisal of the Records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation: A Report to Hon. Harold H. Greene, United States District Court for the District of Columbia. Submitted by the National Archives and Records Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, November 9, 1981," 2 vols.; a review of this report found in AA 45, 4 (Fall 1982): 475-77, by F. Gerald Ham. For other discussions of the FBI records appraisal, see Ham's "Archival Choices: Managing the Historical Record in an Age of Abundance," ibid., 47, 1 (Winter 1984): 20; Leonard Rapport, "In the Valley of Decision: What To Do about the Multitude of Quasi Cases," ibid., 48, 2 (Spring 1985): 186; and David R. Kepley, "Sampling in Archives: A Review," ibid., 47, 3 (Summer 1984): 241-42.

61 Robert M. Warner, "The National Archives and Records Service: The Path Ahead," Prologue 12, 3 (Fall 1980): 156; Bradsher, "Archivists, Historians, and Records Disposition," 5-6, 8.

62 Subsequent to the FBI records appraisal the team approach has been used to appraise Department of Justice litigative case files, U.S. District Court case files, National Aeronautics and Space Administration research and development materials, Civil Service Commission investigative case files, and National Science Foundation contract and grant case files.

63 Unfortunately, in many instances, consultants, in keeping with Schellenberg's dictum that "any scholar with a little intellectual ingenuity can find a plausible justification for keeping almost every record that was ever produced," simply suggested that all case files be retained rather than helping develop specific criteria to identify those case files that truly warranted permanent retention. Schellenberg, Modern Archives, 152.

64 NARS, "1984 Report on Records Disposition," 5-6; NARS, "Appraisal and Disposition Policies in NARS: A Report and Recommendations to the Archivist of the United States on performance of the appraisal and disposition functions in NARS, November 1983."

65 The Records Appraisal and Disposition Division was given responsibility for the appraisal of machine-readable, cartographic, and audiovisual records, which hitherto had been the responsibility of the archival custodial units.

66 NARS, "1982 Report on Records Disposition," 10; NARS, "1983 Report on Records Disposition," 19; NARS, "1984 Report on Records Disposition," 15; NARS, "Appraisal and Disposition Policies in NARS," passim.

67 NARS, "1983 Report on Records Disposition," 6-7; NARS, "1984 Report on Records Disposition," 4-5.